12-10-2003

I genuinely love you. I genuinely love you. I genuinely love you. I genuinely love you. I genuinely love you. I genuinely love you. I genuinely love you. I genuinely love you.

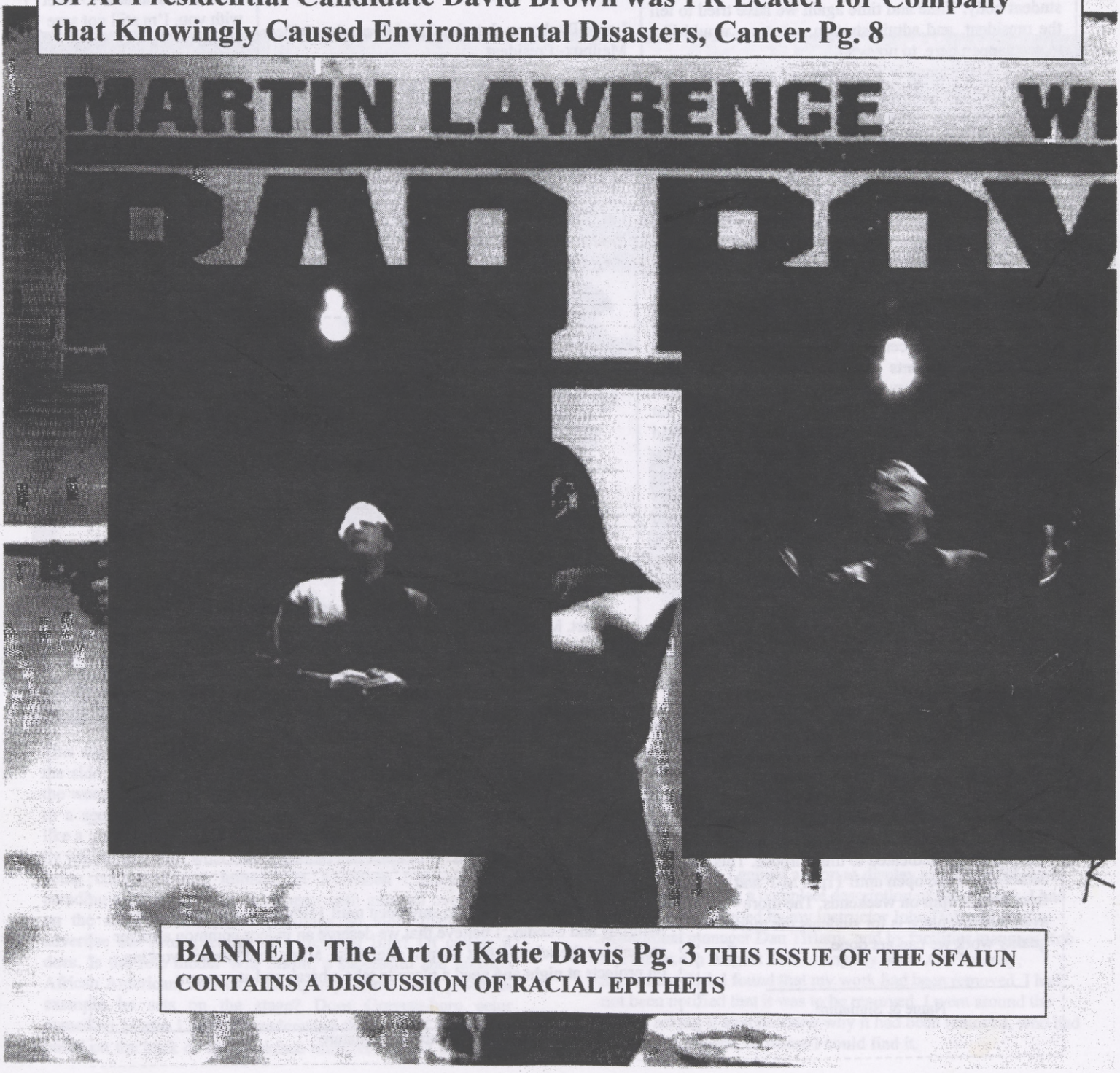
SFAI UNDERGROUND NEWS

Volume I Issue V

December 10, 2003

Contributors: Author Richard Bartlett, Editor Kevin Bonness, Featured Undergrad Katie Davis, Albert Herter, Featured Grad Brandon Jakobeit, mpmcguire, Featured Alumnus Shiri Mordecy, Nate Orman, Environmental Activist Bob Seay, and Cartoonist Jeff Walker

SFAI Presidential Candidate David Brown was PR Leader for Company that Knowingly Caused Environmental Disasters, Cancer Pg. 8



BANNED: The Art of Katie Davis Pg. 3 THIS ISSUE OF THE SFAIUN CONTAINS A DISCUSSION OF RACIAL EPITHETS

Why Not Write a Letter to the Folks Who Make the Decisions Here at SFAI

By mpmcguire

You, the students of SFAI, should speak up about your concerns for this school. Not only that, you should write a letter! Why should you write a letter? Because there are positive changes that should take place, that will enhance your life as a student. I am concerned about the cutbacks that have taken place. I do not believe that they reflect the interests of the student body. Time and time again we have tried to tell the president, and administration, what we would like to see happen here, to no avail.

Unfortunately the quality of student life here at SFAI has gone down. Is this a day time school, or a 24 hour space for students to create? Why then is there no indoor space, for students to congregate, besides the studio spaces, after 4pm? Pete's Café used to be this type of place, and you could get coffee too! Real coffee, not vending machine instant stuff.

One positive new addition to SFAI is the Center for Individual Learning. This is a place for students to write papers, meet with tutors, and check email. Unfortunately students can only use this space 9am-6pm M-Th and 9am-4pm on Fridays. Not all students have a computer available to them outside of school. Keeping the center open later would allow me to get my assignments completed on time. The other night, after the library closed, I witnessed a student being tutored at the ping- pong table! Good lighting but it's cold outside. I guess if you're a smoker this could be an ideal spot for tutoring. These are a few of my concerns and I would like to see these changes occur as soon as possible. If you feel the same way please write a letter to Lorne, Larry, Chrissy, and Susan. Let them know how the decisions that they make affect us. If they hear directly from you, in letter form, maybe they will improve our student life here at the San Francisco Art Institute. It's worth a try.

FYI: WHO'S WHO…

Larry Thomas- Interim President
-Dean of Academic Affairs
Mailbox- Academic Affairs/ President

Lorne Buchman- Interim Chief Executive Officer
Mailbox- President

Christine Godfrey
- VP of Finance
- VP of Administration
- Director of Human Resources
Mailbox- VP of Administration

Susan Green- Director Center for Individual Learning
Mailbox- Center for Individual Learning

All of these mailboxes are located in the school mailroom. The entrance to which is through the Diego Rivera Gallery. Also, if you would rather speak with them in person they should be available to meet with you. I'm still not sure where to find Lorne.

Or, if you are too busy, and you already agree with the proposals I have made, cut out one (or three) of these letters, write your name on it (this is important), sign it, and leave it in the corresponding mailbox

Dear Larry Thomas,
I would like for Pete's Café to stay open until 11PM M-F and until 9PM on Saturday and Sunday. I believe that we deserve an indoor common area for students at the school that is open after 4PM. Many students are working on projects at night and need a place to take a break and stay warm.

_____

Name & Signature

Dear Susan Greene,
Intellectual study is an important part of the process of learning about art. Many students can not finish assignments at school because there is no where open after 6pm that allows them to use word processing. The Center for Individual Learning is the only place on campus solely dedicated to this purpose. This center should be open until 11pm M-F and from noon-11pm on weekends. The more available this place is for students the more quality work we can get done.

_____

Name & Signature

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_____

Name & Signature

Dear Christine Godfrey,
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_____

Name & Signature

Dear Larry Thomas,
I believe that all SFAI students should gain free admission to the SFMOMA. For this school to say that they can not afford it is absurd. They can't not afford it. We used to have free admission. The school should do whatever it takes to ensure this benefit for students. After all this is an art school.

_____

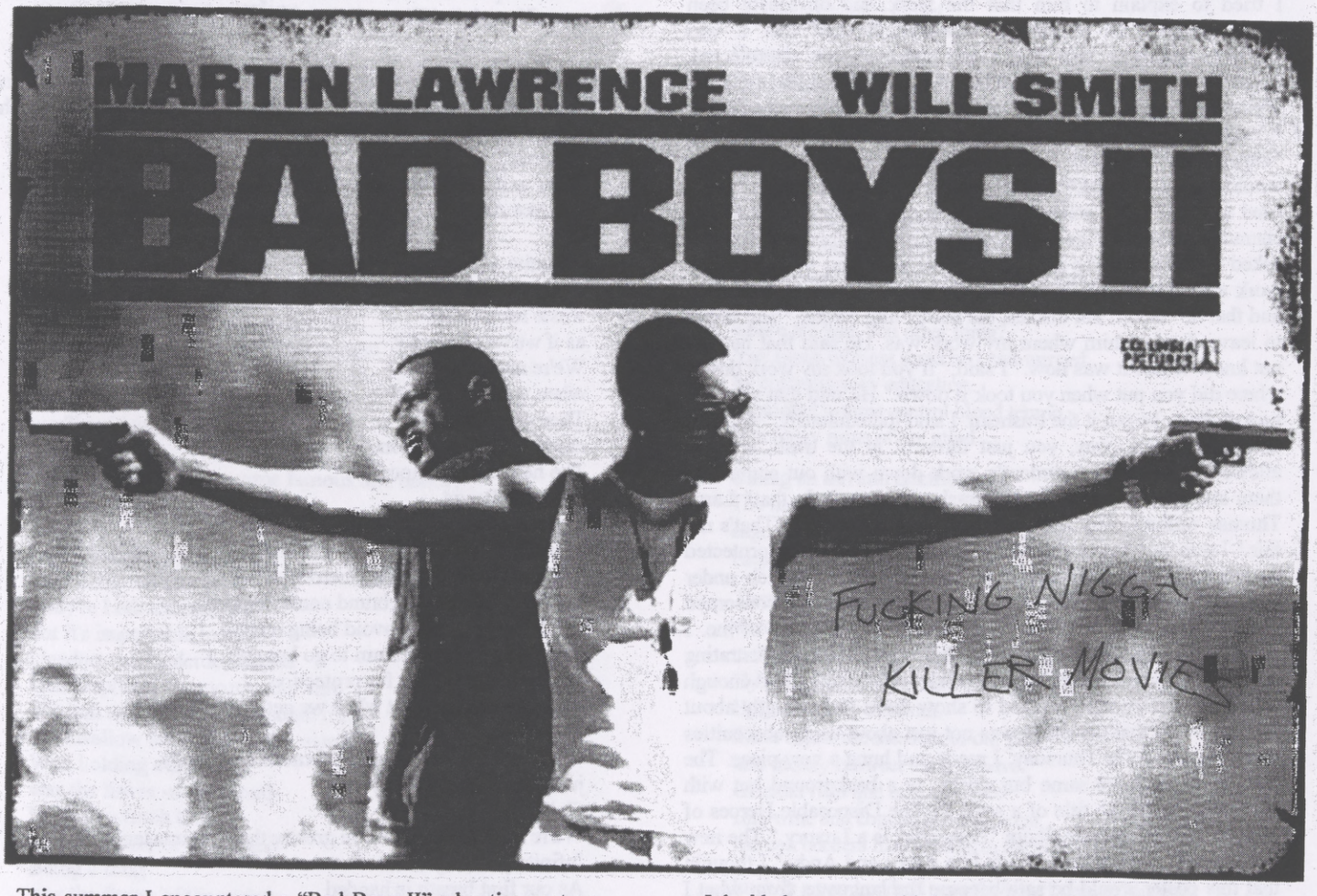
Name & Signature

Dear Lorne Buchman,
I would like for Pete's Café to stay open until 11PM M-F and until 9PM on Saturday and Sunday. I believe that we deserve an indoor common area for students at a school, that is open after 4PM. Many students are working on projects at night and need a place to take a break and stay warm.

_____

Name & Signature

BANNED: The Art of Katie Davis



This summer I encountered a "Bad Boys II" advertisement on the side of a bus; this advertisement had been inscribed with the words: "fucking Nigga Killer Movies" This illicit response to a seemingly tame advertisement for a Hollywood movie- like a good work of art, made me think. It made me think how, by whom, and with what consequences are images like this one being consumed and imitated in American Culture. Does parading an image of two black men with guns all over a city on the sides of buses and buildings do more than simply advertise the short premier of a fictional film? Of course it does. Is the role model Will Smith, a successful and talented African American, aware of the equally -if not more powerful example he sets on the stage? Does German-born actor comedian Martin Lawrence understand the roots of his act are based on the back of the blackface minstrel? I don't know. No

I decided to recreate this bus poster that had haunted me for three months it so that others might question the function of images like these in society. I want to start a dialogue not about race but about why there is and has been a shortage of honest dialogue about the representation of race in the last twenty years.

On August 29th, I gained a form to display artwork. I filled out this form including a complete description of the artwork. I had the application signed by my instructor John DeFazio, by the department manager Dan Tiffany, and by facilities manager Rob Hervatine. On August 31st I hung my work .On Tuesday, September 2nd, I found that my work had been removed. I had not been notified that it was to be removed. I went around the school asking if anyone knew why it had been removed, who had removed my work, or where I could find it.

I asked John Defazio, Dan Tiffany, Rob Hervatine, the security officer, the student services office, and a number of students if they knew why my work had been removed. No one could give me an answer. I decided to remake and re-hang my work. I re-hung the work along with a note to the person who took the work down which, albeit not eloquently, I feel explained why this work was created. I went home.

Arriving at school the next day, Wednesday, I found my work had been removed yet again. I went to the maintenance department where I was told to see the Dean of Academic Affairs Larry Thomas. Larry Thomas was not in. I waited for him outside of his office. When he came by I approached him. I introduced myself, and asked him about my work. I asked him if he took my work down. He said he did. I asked him why. He told me that the language that was in my piece was "violent language and hate language, it was unprotected, and that it would not be tolerated." I tried to explain to him that the work had obviously been misunderstood. He continued, repeating himself that it was "violent language and hate language, it was unprotected, offensive, and that it would not be tolerated." I said that I did not understand what he meant when he said, "unprotected" and "Could [he] please help me understand." He repeated that it was "violent language and hate language, it was unprotected and would not be allowed." This statement clarified nothing to me. I tried to express my concern that he might wrongfully judge my character based on the misunderstandings of this encounter. I asked if I could make an appointment with him to discuss my work and intent with him. He said that he "was not interested" and that he "would not discuss the matter any further," and began to leave. I asked him where my work was. He said that he "did not know where it was now." I said, "If you took my work down, where did you put when you took it down." He said that when he took it down he put it the trashcan. I said incredulously:" you just threw my work away, you just threw it in the trash...are you allowed to just take a student's work down with out contacting them and just throw it into the trash... you can't do that" Larry Thomas walked away back into his office. I shouted, "That's not fair." I was very upset. I went home and I looked up "unprotected speech." What exactly constitutes as unprotected speech under what circumstances remains unclear to me. I was still concerned with what the Dean of Academic Affairs now thought of me. I decided that maybe I could regain his respect by demonstrating that getting the message of my artwork out was important enough to me to keep trying. I wanted to show that I feel strongly about this issue and that my piece was not just about using obscenities and vulgarities. On Thursday, I made and hung a new piece. The new piece used the same bus poster as a background but with new text. I used the title of a song by The Disposable Heroes of Hip Hoprisy from their album "Hypocrisy is a Luxury." The new poster said "Famous and Dandy like Amos and Andy." I thought that this poster would be safe because the language, from what I could gather, was "protected." On Friday morning my poster had been ripped down again. On Sunday morning a note was placed in my student mailbox. The note requested that I meet with Laurie Silver to "discuss the situation."

Editor's note: I accompanied Katie Davis to her meeting with Laurie silver. Laurie smiled a lot and told Katie that the school wanted to have a dialog with Katie about Katie's work. Katie responded that "usually the work is allowed to be shown and then a dialog comes next." Laurie promised that she would get the interested parties together and never contacted Katie again. Black's Law Dictionary defines hate speech as "speech that carries no meaning other than the expression of hatred for some group, such as a particular race, especially in circumstances where the communication is likely to provoke violence." BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY 1407-08 (7th ed. 199 9). California's newly enacted Leonard Law California prohibits the administration of a private institution such as SFAI from imposing rules upon its students which would be unconstitutional outside its walls: **Education Code 94367**. (a) No private postsecondary educational institution shall make or enforce any rule subjecting any student to disciplinary sanctions solely on the basis of conduct that is speech or other communication that, when engaged in outside the campus or facility of a private postsecondary institution, is protected from governmental restriction by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or Section 2 of Article 1 of the California Constitution. (b) Any student enrolled in a private postsecondary institution that has made or enforced any rule in violation of subdivision (a) may commence a civil action to obtain appropriate injunctive and declaratory relief as determined by the court. Upon motion, a court may award attorney's fees to a prevailing plaintiff in a civil action pursuant to this section.

The Lyrics to the song "Famous and Dandy like Amos and Andy" by The Disposable Heroes of Hip Hoprisy From the Album "Hypocrisy is a Luxury."
[Chorus:]
What will we do to become famous and dandy
just like Amos 'n' Andy
(2x)
It's quite a spectacle
to see us land in
waste receptacles
as if we've planned it
We're never skeptical
when we get branded
Then disrespectful
cause we feel abandoned
The height of mediocrity
is the challenge
Crawling through the entrails
of imbalance
We leam to like to be the heroes
We leam to lie to the brand name negroes
We leam to laugh to avoid being angry
We leam to kill and leam to go hungry
We leam not to feel, for protection
and we leam to flaunt when we get an erection
[Chorus:]
What will we do to become famous and dandy,
just like Amos 'n' Andy
(2x)
We're bom believing we're greater than circumstance
Infinitely stronger than chance
As our first breath is handed
We taste the double standard
the need to wear the mask
And with society's nurturing
The psychic plastic surgery
begins to take effect
As our souls watch astounded
Our characters flounder
duplicitous identity
Diction and contradiction
have become the skills
of assimilation
Razor honed to perfection
From the moment of creation
It's gone from identity crisis

To survival slingshot to rifle
Sin to revival
Try to get looked at
but not poked in the eyeball
Warned of our impurities
Afraid of insecurities
Real life experts of the artificial
Athletes and entertainers
have become the minstrels
on commercials
[Chorus:]
What will we do to become famous and dandy,
just like Amos 'n' Andy
(2x)
On screen or off we can be rented
to perform any feat
And we reflect the images presented
by the media's elite
Positive or negative attention
is viewed as success
U.S.D.A. African American Beef
is seen as progress
We never ask ourselves
too many questions
too much thrum in introspection
Maintain the regimentation
and avoid self-degradation
We act out all the stereotypes
Try to use them as decoy
and we become shining examles
of the system we set out to destroy
Cause even in the most radical groups
you will find
that when you stray from the doctrine
you'll see hard times
[Chorus:]
What will we do to become famous and dandy,
just like Amos 'n' Andy
(2x)
Being kicked in the mouth
or smiling with no teeth
They're both choices, yes
but it's impossible to eat
Uneducated, underdeveloped
Undisciplined but mostly unaware
We join the flavor of the month club
We swallow the flavor of the month
Well holding our crotch
was the flavor of the month
Bitch this Bitch that
was the flavor of the month
Being a thug
was the flavor of the month
Then no to drugs
was the flavor of the month
Kangol
was the flavor of the month
Rope gold
was the flavor of the month
Adidas shoes
was the flavor of the month
Then bashing Jews
was the flavor of the month
Gentrification
was the flavor of the month
Isolation
was the flavor of the month

My pockets are so empty I can feel my testicles
cause I spent all my money on some plastic African necklaces
and I still don't know what the colors mean...
RED, BLACK AND GREEN
[Chorus:]
What will we do to become famous and dandy,
just like Amos 'n' And

"written in the stripes of the tiger"

By Albert Herter

written in the stripes of the tiger,
another uneventful evening
spent sharpening the TV
spent brushing her face
the dogs are mating quietly
in the downstairs closet.

Crowds hone in on cash
like bees on wax or ants
on shit.

Luckily the deers were occupied
with the natural intonation of grinding stones

Mystery plays on the kitchen table
The dogs dance in the garage
land masses snarl, and beneath eachother
as the earth is kneeded by time
where are you, you other thing?
You plane of glass scratched and warped
by contemporary education.
Hypnotist rythms control blood tempo.
The foggy ruins of my mind

Dining on ash and electricity.
The moon sucks the marrow of the earth,
eager as a demon drooling over flames.
Eager as a rodent.

There is a sollipsistic quiver
which vibrates here and now
to the tune of a marching band
Hysteria parrades the market place
Hell, we know the truth.
Time is just the measure of our pain
and money is sweet thing to have.
Oriental rugs and quality stereo
fine wine and cognac and a nice car.
Korean borders like fissures in the schizo mind.

Luck is a two hundred pound whore I paid to hug me.

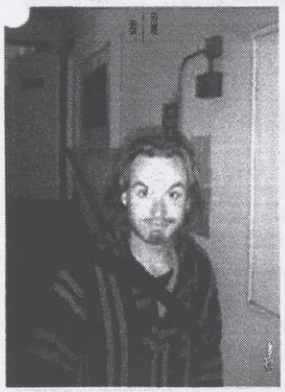
The moon is sucking the marrow of a whale corpse
worms a meter long and thick as your arm
billowing fields of anchored suck-worms cover the sea bottom
The power line dancing on ice
Hysteria, hypnotism, blood and women
twelve months of the solar system

My sternum knows the future lottery
the teabag knows the train wreck
The fires of san francisco spread north
even towards the arctic

Grid systems spell "last days"
and the neighbors dog is in hysterics

Portfolio Review for Methods Sequence Under Discussion

by Nate Orman



Every student follows a unique path through SFAI in developing his or her art, but one stop common to all undergraduates is the Methods A and B sequence. This rite of passage may have a new wrinkle as early as next year, with the proposed addition of a "portfolio review" for the papers written during this course.

Similar to the existing Writing Portfolio review, the Methods portfolio review will require students to submit two or three of their best papers at the end of the Methods B to a panel of Methods instructors, with passing the review a requirement for receiving a grade for Methods B. Since these changes have the potential to affect one's ability to graduate on schedule, students should be aware that this idea is actively being examined by the administration.

Discussions for this change began last spring as a part of the process of compiling a report for WASC, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, which is the organization through which SFAI is accredited. WASC accreditation is vital to SFAI, as it allows students to easily transfer academic credits to and from other accredited institutions. Representatives from WASC will be visiting campus in December, but the report, which outlines the state of academics at SFAI and responds to issues previously raised by WASC, will be due in July of next year. SFAI has postponed visits from WASC in the past, recently due to the financial issues and structural changes in the administration.

"WASC was really impressed by the writing portfolio review," said Susan Martin, Academic Advisor, expressing that approval was due to the data-rich nature of the review process. WASC guidelines require schools to specify evidence for meeting claims of academic rigor, and all the submitted papers for this review are saved for a length of time, in order to allow WASC the opportunity to review the quality of student work in detail if the auditors desire it. According to Martin, while other mechanisms exist for answering the WASC requirements, such as evaluating syllabi or auditing classes, those methods have problems with providing concrete evidence. In addition, this review appeals to those who manage our academic curriculum because it will act as a check for what goes on in the various Methods classes and a way of measuring the effectiveness of the course. Similar review processes to cover studio classes have also been considered

Jon Lang, is managing the ongoing discussions about this proposal and offered some details on how the process might work. At the end of the Methods B semester, the methods instructors would come together ("At least six instructors" Lang said) to review the papers. The papers would be read first by one instructor, one who has not directly taught the student for Methods, and if the student's work fails a first reading and the student's original Methods instructor disagrees with that evaluation, a second unbiased instructor would then review the portfolio, leading to a discussion where the instructors would ideally achieve consensus on the student's work. "This would prevent any arbitrary decisions," Lang said, "and if a student has an issue with a particular instructor, this should nullify that." And if the Methods classes are taught correctly, the fail rate for this portfolio review should be low like the writing composition review.

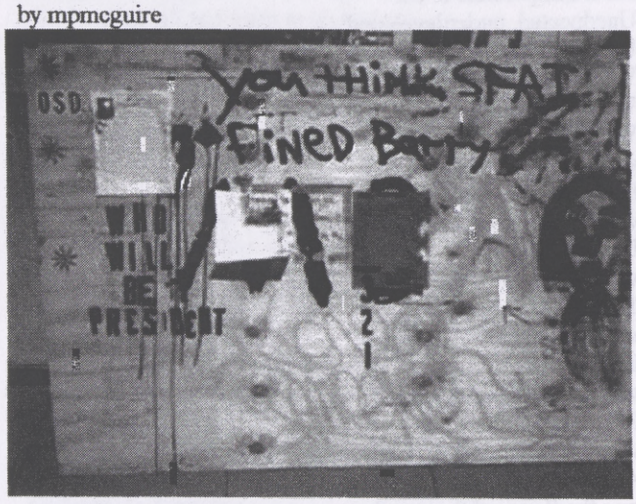
According to Lang, a group known simply as "Team 2" is primarily developing new protocols for academic assessment and working on the Methods proposal. Team 2 includes Susan Martin, Mark Van Proyen, Richard Berger, Stephanie Ellis, Paul Kline, Herb Tobey, Jennifer Riesler, and Jon Lang.

These discussions are in progress, but the intention would be to implement this next year so students should take the opportunity soon to express their opinions on the proposed changes. While the committees that are dealing with curriculum and evaluating education effectiveness have no formal student input, interested students can approach the committee members directly to voice concerns. Lang said that students will likely be given enough warning about these changes so that one would have an option to take the Methods sequence before a review process is established. But if this process is put into place next year as they hope, only those students who have started taking the Methods sequence this spring would be exempt, so concerned students ought to pay attention to this. In response to concerns about timing, as most students take Methods during their senior year and would encounter this portfolio review shortly before graduation, Lang assured that results of this review should not be surprising or wildly different than one's performance in the class. He voiced a desire for sufficient tutor support to assist students who continue to struggle with papers. "We would have to develop a strategy for helping students in a timely manner," said Lang. He also mentioned that this change might precipitate a change in the timing of student enrollment in Methods, pushing students to take the sequence in their junior year instead.

It appears likely that decisions regarding this portfolio review will be made in the coming weeks, so interested students ought to pay attention as this develops and make their feedback and criticism known.

The Graffiti issue: An Interview with Matt Sauna

by mpmcguire

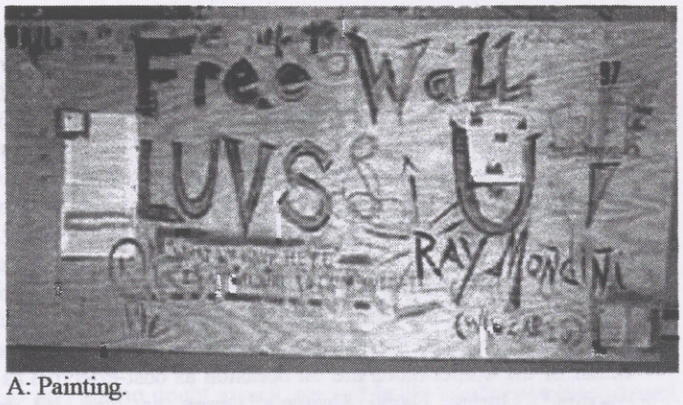


Images from mpmcguire's piece "The Free Wall"

Q: How long have you been a student here at SFAI?

A: Four years. (freshman to senior year) Yeah, the long haul, the art stretch.

Q: What's your major?



A: Painting.

Q: Why did you decide to attend SFAI, as opposed to other schools?

A: Well, three parts... San Francisco, ...the reputation for being more progressive than classical, ...the admissions lady was good, she explained and answered my questions. I felt content with her pitching the school, ... versatility in art.

Q: What is it about life that inspires you to paint?

A: Contradictions,...and being socially inept, nah I'm kidding...what did Carlos say?... (trails off)

Q: When did you first get caught at SFAI for graffiti?

A: I never physically got caught. I was called into Laurie silvers office for a clay-throwing incident down in sculpture. The maintenance guys were there to talk to me about it. One of them accused me of tagging and asked me to comment on that. This one maintenance guy says that people have told him I tag, and he also noticed?

Q: So, were you caught in the act of graffiti here at SFAI?

A: I was never caught doing graffiti. They caught me on video "dust tagging" the lift at the end of the ramp in sculpture.

Q: What is dust tagging?

A: You know, when you see a dusty surface and you draw something in it with your finger...?

(we laugh, and I'm wondering how this is even considered a punishable offense.) The school gave the video of me doing that to the DA/ police.

Q: What happened with the clay incident?

A: Another person and I got into a clay fight in sculpture one night. We had to pay for the clean up. It was considered vandalism. I was given community service and had to work around the school for maintenance. I did some of it but then stopped doing it. One time I was having trouble cleaning up cigarette butts, cuz they get stuck between the cracks of those square tiles. The maintenance guy made me a tool with a stick and a pin to get the cigarette butts out...

Q: What happened when you stopped doing the community service?

A: I had to pay $250 to the school.

Q: How or when did the police become involved with SFAI graffiti abatement?

A: I don't know specifically. I was told that the SF police contacted the school for information. The graffiti task force involved the school.

Q: The maintenance dept. has a photographic record of most of the graffiti they've covered up. Do you know how long they've been doing that?

A: I'm not sure how long the school has been documenting graffiti.

Q: What happened when the police searched your locker?

A: Another student told me about it and I walked by my locker, I found out the police came with a search warrant, photographed my stuff, took relative contents, and left it open with the warrant receipt of everything that was taken on the door. There was one cop and one maintenance guy. (he jokes) One SFPD and one SFAIMD.

Q: How did this affect you as a student?

A: It was a bit unnerving. My teachers were pretty understanding, but it gave me a lot of heart burn. It ostracized me from school; it felt like somebody breathing down your back.

Q: Do you think any one at SFAI received money for informing police about you?

A: I don't know.

Q: What happened after the locker search?

A: That day I received a bill from school. It was a couple of days before the end of the semester.

There was a summary list of tags, some with dates and locations, like it said "tag", in silver pen, with a number next to it ...=$30, or pen tag on chair ...=$30. It also said something like the SFAI maintenance dept., and the SFPD, finds you're responsible for/ or affiliated with... information they find...concluded that I did, and have to pay for two pages of graffiti.

Q: So it was like an itemized list?

A: Every thing, even other peoples tags, I could've argued but...

Q: Do you feel that the graffiti abatement policy at SFAI is unnecessary/ or unfair?

A: Yeah, I mean I do personally, but I understand the idea of a good school... a clean façade that goes with the reputation. But it puts limitations on art making. Graffiti or vandalism might make it look more run down, or ghetto, not as valid as a clean school. The façade that goes with the reputation... progressive people are here for art...(shakes his head) It's more or less absurd.

(I'm not sure that matt really believes that the façade of the school should be that clean. After all this is an art school. It seems more like he's trying to understand how they came down so hard on him for graffiti. It seems to me that the school was using him as an example for other students... This is what could happen to you if you continue to scribble, tag or mark.)

Q: Do you believe that graffiti and vandalism are synonymous?

A: I don't think so at all. They definitely incorporate both into the same category. Vandalism is destruction of property. Graffiti is more like saturation, but not on your own personal property. That's just the nature of graffiti, that's just part of it. Mass opinion says that vandalism begets graffiti, that it's destruction but it's not... it's like a giant message board.

Q: Have you heard of former student and now famous graffiti artist Barry McGee?

A: Oh, everyone's heard of Barry McGee, everyone's heard of TWISTA!

Q: Was he also a Painting major?

A: I think he was an Interdisciplinary major, did a lot of installation and mixed media.

(That is a major that may not be included in the undergraduate degree program SFAI any more.)

Q: Do you know if Albert Reyes (GIVE) was disciplined for graffiti at SFAI? (He is one student who definitely left his mark on campus.)

A: I don't know... I don't think so, I doubt it...Albert some how fits into the 'forwarding of the school reputation'. Plus he was pre-Larry Thomas.

Q: Can you speculate on how many students are punished monetarily for graffiti at SFAI?

A: Per year, I don't know maybe 4 or 5... (I've heard of at least this many last semester) I had to pay because it would've involved getting kicked out of school. But I never had to admonish guilt/ responsibility. They kind of stuck me. I paid them so I could finish school and get my degree. If I fought it...with three classes left to graduate, that would've been too much.

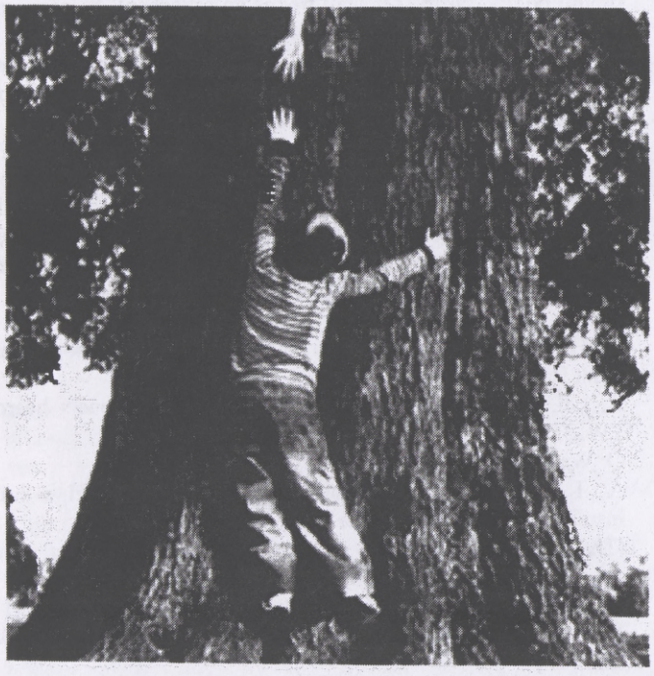
Q: How much do you think students pay in fines for graffiti?

A: Not much, annually maybe less than $3000. But they come down hard enough. There's been a major drop; painting on walls is becoming taboo... nobody's done a mural on the new genre's wall (by Pete's cafe) all semester.

Q: My last questions are for SFAI. Does the amount of money, that students are fined for graffiti, correspond to the cost of covering it up? How important is it to keep art students from marking chairs, table desks, etc.? Is it worth the time and effort it takes to investigate, and to discipline students for graffiti? SFAI what are your priorities?
OPINION: I don't mind seeing the school marked by students of today and of yesterday. Looking at the desks in the drawing studios doesn't distract me from being an artist, it sparks my interest. White walls are okay, but very boring. I miss the black walls and chalk in the bathroom. Not only did the walls look better, but they gave students a chance to communicate, be stupid, and have fun. I felt sad when I saw that the art on the roof, above the amphitheatre, was covered over with an awful rusty red. Take a look at it now, the older images are seeping through the paint. One last thing, everybody take a walk past the mailboxes towards studio 8, look at the floor just below the first step...

SFAI Presidential Candidate David Brown was PR Leader for Company that Knowingly Caused Cancer Clusters

By Kevin Bonness



David Brown's resume lists Champion Papers as a freelance client from 1972 to 1978. Browns primary employer from 1978 to 1985, was Champion where he acted as Director and then Vice President of PR. The following is a chronology of Champion's practices including recent interviews with experts as to the nature of Brown's involvement.

Since 1908 the Champion paper mill at Canton, North Carolina has expelled its wastes into the Pigeon River which flows into Tennessee. The Canton mill is a "Kraft mill," using a specific Sulfate and Sulfite chemical process which is cost effective for the mill but extremely wasteful of wood resources, with only 50 percent of the wood going into the paper. The Kraft process is problematic also because of the foul stench and pollution it produces. Though considerable capital went into the research and development of Kraft process, the paper industry is well known for its approach to pollution control. As Professor David C. Smith, author of the *History of Papermaking in the United States (1691-1969)*, states, "the evidence is that the industry at this stage [from 1924 onward] spent almost all of its time in defeating antipollution legislation, rather than attempting to control it through research." Such conditions remain true today. As Richard Bartlett, author of *Troubled Waters: Champion International and the Pigeon River Controversy*, explains, Champion has employed a three-tiered approach to combat the regulation of its pollution: high-priced lawyers, political influence and finally, "there are the public relations firms. Their six-figure retainers and their campaigns on behalf of the corporations are on occasion as cost-effective as the lawyers." During David Brown's tenure as lead PR man, Champion will continue its long history of combating the bad press generated by is practices.

Media manipulation and broken promises are a constant. Newport Tennessee, a town 51.8 miles downstream from Champion's Mill, ran this lead story in its local paper on April 18, 1912: "The Champion Fibre Company is making every effort to stop the pollution of the Pigeon River which is carrying its black waters into the French Broad and Tennessee Rivers." These efforts failed to materialize and, by 1940, the Pigeon River had become so polluted that the town of Newport had to pipe its water from a river six miles away even though the polluted Pigeon River runs directly through its heart. In 1941 a government survey states that all normal life had died within the Pigeon which "presents a condition of gross pollution, with only pollutional or very tolerant organisms present." A headline from 1960 states that the Pigeon will be "75% clean by 1961," quoting Champion chemist Fred V. Doutt, who goes on to state that, "the water would be fit for livestock use, for sporting fish, for irrigational purposes, and for swimming, if any local youngster should want to take a dip in it." The clean up, again, failed to materialize. The waters the local chemist recommends to the "local youngsters" contain dioxin, often referred to as "the most potent carcinogen known to man" at the highest concentrations ever documented in any river tested by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Mayo clinic associates dioxin with leukemia in 1963 and from 1966 until 1974, Champion executive, Mark Taifer, held internal

discussions concerning the growing medical literature associating Pentchlorophenol or PCP (not the narcotic) and its by-product dioxin with illness and disease. Champion chemist, Lester Weinbrenner in a letter of January 8, 1968, wrote "in some instances we know that our customers are a little careless in the handling of Woodlife and certainly suggest that they instruct their workers to apply good habits of personal hygiene, use neoprene-lined gloves, aprons, boots and other protective clothing."

Frank Foss, Champion's sales representative in 11 Western states, did not know that Champion executives had exchanged memos in which they state, "it should be noted that we currently handle penta incorrectly. In addition our customers handle the finished penta solution incorrectly" and "unfortunately, as you are no doubt aware, we had badly used pentachlorophenol over the years and do not take the normal precautions for a product of this toxicity." This toxicity and the precautions necessary in the handling of this product were never made known to Champion's customers. Had Champion's consumers known of the actual toxicity of PCP, sales of the Champion product would have suffered. The studies kept coming, showing the intense carcinogenicity of the chemicals champion was selling. In 1973 dioxin is declared a human carcinogen. In 1976 PCP is shown to cause birth defects.

Having widely distributed this highly toxic substance, Champion knew that a wave of cancers deaths was soon to materialize. In 1978 PCP it is proven to be a carcinogen. In 1978 David Brown became Director of Creative Services, responsible for "communications programs in support of company strategy." It is likely that Champion's PR strategy was concerned with managing the effects of PCP and dioxin exposure.

It will be shown that Pentachlorophenol causes leukemia in doses as small as 16 to 550 parts per billion when absorbed through the skin.

Concurrent with the revelations about Dioxin and PCP, the backlash along the Pigeon River was mounting. A 1973 government study reveals that there were periods in which "no life other than bacteria could have existed in the water." In 1978, Champion was sued successfully by the Environmental Protection Agency. It would seem likely that the new director of PR would have been aware of this fact. Brown became Vice President in 1981. The most powerful legal drive against Champion's Pigeon River facility began in 1982 with a presentation to the Tennessee Attorney General. Environmentalist Bob Seay who made his way onto Champion's Canton Mill with a television crew began the media assault the following year. The day he had chosen to arrive happened to be the 75 anniversary of the mill's opening. Seay and his crew were given the royal treatment, escorted around the plant by two Vice Presidents in a limousine. When Bob informed them that he wasn't interested in the anniversary but wanted to see "see where you put the discharge back in the river," the Vice presidents are seen trying to redirect the tour, then quickly getting back in the limousine and speeding off. The film crew led by Seay then proceeded to the pipe which sends blackened sludge into the river. Richard Bartlett states that "this incident marks the beginning of the of the Pigeon River problem as an ongoing story in the Knoxville media. By bringing the polluted Pigeon River into Knoxville residents' minds over and over again, sentiment in the city has built up against Champion." Bob Seay will form the Dead Pigeon River Council which has been the most instrumental group in pressuring Champion to clean up its wastes.

I spoke to Bob Seay, asking him if David Brown, as head PR man, would have been aware of the pollution problem and actively involved in sanitizing Champion's image. He replied that "their image and advertising as far as here in Appalachia was driven by the dictates of pure corporate greed. Champion ran a paper mill that used the entire volume of one of the regions smallest rivers, turning it into a malodorous industrial sewer with the highest level of dioxin ever found in fish tissue anywhere tested by the EPA. And this was 17 miles below the plant. Tests were done in '83 and '85. If David Brown was in charge of PR, he knew. It has been an ongoing problem for decades and everyone knew. There was a constant force by Champion to spin the information of this case." When asked if he had any thoughts regarding Mr. Brown's candidacy for President of the Art Institute, Mr. Seay responded, "I would really encourage your readers to ask some real, hard, tough questions of the ethics of the individual under consideration. In my opinion he certainly did know about the pollution of the Pigeon River and was part of the corporate cover up, the effort to misinform the EPA and the people of this region. That mill broke production records during the worst drought in decades during this period. The water was thick and syrupy thus rendering the name Dead Pigeon River Council. Only a very few bottom feeder fish could exist and they had open lesions. Everybody in the whole region knew." I asked the same question to Richard Bartlett author of *Troubled waters*. "Of course he knew about it; they all knew. It's a given. He would have known about the dangers 78-85. Knowledge of Champion's pollution simply permeated the industry. They'd hire powerful PR people and then they would use the politics any way they could. There was a constant PR battle from the beginning of the 70's onward." As to whether Mr. Brown would be a good SFAI President, Bartlett took another tack. "My guess is that Mr. Brown would probably do a great job. An interesting thing about champion, in their offices, they had photos of the best people you ever did see. They just sort of separate the way they make their living, the things that they have to do, somehow, from the rest of their lives. They are dedicated to the bottom line. The people whom I interviewed, they were concerned with their employees and they gave money to various charitable organizations and to art associations. I remember them giving supplies to a local fair. But as to whether or not he knew about the pollution, there is no question. He knew. They all knew."

In 1981, as Brown was becoming VP, the dangers of PCP were becoming widely known in a fashion that must have been too close for comfort at Champion. A study that year in the *British Journal*

of Cancer shows an eight-fold increase in soft tissue sarcomas and malignant lymphomas in forestry workers who had used PCP. In regard to Champion's product, the chickens came home to roost when Tim Skaggs was diagnosed with leukemia and doctors noticed that there were three further cases among fellow workers at Simpson's Timber in Humboldt County. Fat samples taken from Skaggs containing the same chemical signature as Champion's product proved that the cancer cluster was due to this product, which Skaggs had used without gloves or a respirator. There is now a sixteen-fold increase in the rate of Leukemia in that region. Further cancer clusters have arisen in those who have lived in homes constructed with Champions products, others are suspected at the Leech Lake Indian reservation where a baby was recently born without thumbs and two extra vertebrae. Leech lake tribal leader, Gerald White, when interviewed stated, that most of Champion's production sites are located in marginalized communities "I mean, let's get real here. Most of the environmental justice concerns are in communities of color and poor communities." Here, White is strongly echoed by Gay Webb, current spokesman of the Dead Pigeon River Council. "You can pollute in areas of poverty, not in affluent areas. Crime, pollution and poverty all go together." The Pigeon River runs through the poorest areas of Appalachia. Dioxin and PCP improperly used at Simpson's lumber have now been found in Humboldt Bay. Champion has changed its name to International Paper. The photos shown within this article come from their homepage

A poster with information on this topic was put up by the *SFAI Underground News*. Within a half hour, the posters had been taken down by an unknown party.

Citations

SKAGGS V. CHAMPION INTERNATIONAL. This is the source of internal communications at Champion. The complete legal file in Skaggs v. Champion International is archived with the Clerk of the Humboldt County Superior Court, No. DR 85488. The Alexander Law Firm also served as plaintiffs' counsel in three related dioxin/pentachlorophenol caused wrongful death cases involving Simpson employees who had worked at the Arcata plant. Settlements in those cases are confidential. Gordon v. U. S. Plywood- Champion Papers, Humboldt County Superior Court Action No. 92 DR 0135; Carper v. U. S. Plywood-Champion Papers, Humboldt County Superior Court No. 92 DR 0378; Freeman v. U.S. Plywood-Champion Papers, Humboldt County Superior Court No. 93 DR 0275

SCIENTIFIC: Pentachlorophenol was first known as a carcinogen in 1978. Greene, et al., Familial and Sporadic Hodgkin's Disease Associated with Occupational Wood Exposure, The Lancet, September 16, 1978, pp. 626-27; Goldstein, et al., Effects of Pentachlorophenol on Hepatic Drug/Metabolizing Enzymes and Porphyria Related to Contamination with Chlorinated Dibenzo-p-Dioxins and Dibenzo-Furans [1977] Biochem. Pharmacol. 26:1549-57. Adverse health effects associated with exposure to dioxins and furans, such as found in pentachlorophenol, are well documented. Schwetz et al., The Effect of Purified and Commercial Grade Pentachlorophenol on Rat Embryonal and Fetal Development [1974], Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology 28:151-61. Dioxins were considered carcinogens in rodents since the late 1970's. Kociba, et al., Results of a Two Year Chronic Toxicity and Oncogenicity Study of 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-Dioxin in Rats [1978], Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology 46:279-303; Van Miller et al., Increased Incidence of Neoplasms in Rats Exposed to Low Levels of 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-Dioxin [1977], Chemosphere 10:625; Muranyi-Kovacs, et al., Bioassay of 2,4,5-Trichlorophenoxyacetic Acid for Carcinogenicity in Mice [1976] British Journal of Cancer 33:626. Numerous studies associate occupations in the lumber and sawmill industry with acute leukemias, Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphomas and multiple myelomas. Milham, Study of Mortality Experience of AFL-CIO United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of American, 1969-70 [1974], DHEW Pub. No. 74-129, Springfield, Virginia, National Technical Information Service; Jappinen, et al., Cancer Incidence of Workers in Finnish Sawmill [1989], Scand. J. Work Environ. Health 15:18-23; Morton and Marjanovic, Leukemia Incidences By Occupation in Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area [1984] Am. J. Ind. Med. 6:185-205; Burkart, Leukemia in Hospital Patients with Occupational Exposure to Sawmill Industry[1982], West. J. Med. 137:440-441; Erickson, et al., Study on Malignant Mesenchymal Tumors of Soft Tissues and Exposure to Chemical Substances [1979], Lahartidningen 76:3872-75; Hardell, Malignant Lymphoma of Histiocytic Type and Exposure to Phenoxyacetic Acids or Chlorophenols [1979], Lancet i:56; Milham and Hessler, Hodgkin's Disease in Woodworkers [1967] Lancet ii: 136-37. Hardell in a 1981 study of forestry workers exposed to chlorophenols found an eight-fold increase in soft tissue sarcomas and malignant lymphomas due to herbicides containing chlorophenols, primarily PCP. Hardell, et al., Malignant Lymphoma and Exposure to Chemicals, Especially Organic Solvents, Chlorophenols and Phenoxy Acids: A Case-Control Study [1981], British Journal of Cancer, 43:169-76.

Featured Alumnus Shiri Mordecy at her solo opening at the Locura Gallery. See Shiri and SFAI undergraduate Robert Vergara at their upcoming opening at 8 PM Friday December 12th at the Build Gallery, 483 Guerrero St. Below, Featured Graduate Brandon Jakobeit.

ANGEL THUG

Durkheim, Frazer and the Work of Katie Davis

By Kevin Bonness

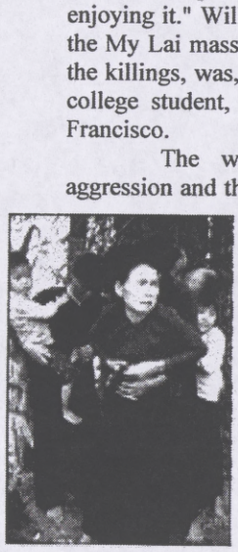
Ethnocentrism at SFAI

The primary intent of this essay is not to discuss the art of Katie Davis, but to understand the remarkable incidents that have arisen recently in connection with this work. As I began the investigation into this matter, I was certain that the solution could be found quickly, but I was soon led far afield and even in order to produce the schematic treatment provided here, I have had to reconsider several commonplace concepts, most particularly, those concerning the word bigotry and its application in our culture at SFAI and, more broadly, in the US. We think of prejudice as a mental aberration, identifiable, punishable, eradicable but bigotry, I found, is a stream that when arrested here, flows there. Its manifestations have the quality of being always slightly beyond any society's agility of comprehension and control. Bigotry is natural. There are innumerable ways in which a society can organize its posture toward concepts of justice and equality. This essay will suggest that we have been remiss and slow in our efforts to address these issues in the spirit of genuine self-criticism and with sufficient rigor.

Ethnocentrism, a term social scientists have applied for about a century, refers to a group's tendency to elevate the estimation of itself and to correspondingly to disparage the worth of others. Ethnocentrism is widely believed to be a cultural universal. The Caribs among many other groups believe that they alone are truly human. The Lapps, the Tunguses, and the Kiowa among many others have names that mean the real people, the principle people or simply, "the people." Jews, Christians and Muslims along with many others denote themselves as "God's chosen people," as do the Mbayas of South America who's God justifies and demands wars of conquest brutally waged upon the foreigner. By large scale, cross-cultural surveys of evidence such as this, many social scientists believe that ethnocentrism is a concept that applies to all societies, including our own.

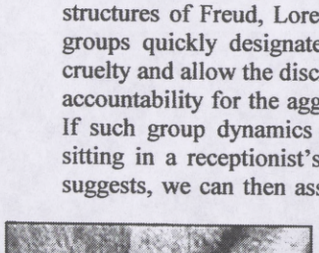
The more specific processes operational in the inception of ethnocentrism are clarified in a number of experiments undertaken by psychologists during the 1960's and 70's. In the 1969 Latane-Rodin experiment, subjects are directed into an office where they are instructed to fill out a form given them by a by a female receptionist who then withdraws from sight. Shortly thereafter, following a sound of a heavy impact, the receptionist's agonized cries are heard. 70% of experimental subjects in these conditions go quickly to the receptionist's assistance. When a second person is planted in the room who is secretly instructed to remain silently unresponsive, 93% of experimental subjects do not respond to the receptionist's injury, allowing her to suffer indefinitely. In numbers as small as two and without words, group pressures form significantly affecting behavior, in this case the administering of compassion to fellow human in need. More disturbingly, Stanley Milgram found most people willing to electrocute others *to death*, if instructed to by an authority figure. And most shockingly the 1972 Zimbardo Prison Study demonstrates that students playing roles in a mock prison constructed in the basement of Stanford University quickly forget it is just pretend and soon begin subjecting classmates to real, rapidly escalating emotional and physical abuse often of a pornographic and scatological nature. The effect of this environment became so overpowering, that even Dr. Philip Zimbardo in a short period of time gave into group pressures to dismiss the student- prisoners' humanity. Within days many, including Zimbardo, no longer believed it was a simulation but a real. One minute a friendly classmate, the next a brutal prison guard, in the right conditions the distance is quite short. Experiments such as these have been used to understand atrocities such as the 1968 My Lai massacre in which American servicemen slaughtered 504 defenseless Vietnamese villagers, 173 children, 56 infants, 182 women, 17 pregnant and 56 men over the age of sixty. When asked why they had murdered these unarmed, totally defenseless noncombatants, all many soldiers could reply was that "everybody was doing it." One serviceman, Herbert Carter, recalls a jovial atmosphere during the slaughter. "You can tell when someone enjoys their work. The boys enjoyed it. When someone laughs and jokes about what they're doing, they have to be enjoying it." William L. Calley, the commander most responsible for the My Lai massacre who took a very active and enthusiastic role in the killings, was, only a few years earlier, a very average sometimes college student, just like ourselves, trying to find himself in San Francisco.

The wider causality underpinning such outbursts of aggression and their function within ethnocentric structures has itself been the subject of intense speculation. An early but still-operative theory in this field, first put forth by Sigmund Freud, states that the drive to live, *Eros*, is offset by an opposite and equal drive to destroy life, *Thanatos*. Focused inward, this death impulse results in sexual masochism and religious mysticism, the word "nirvana" referring literally to the extinguishment of the self. When these forces are focused outward, as is most common, the death drive results in sadistic sexuality and violence. These noxious impulses, which would tear apart the home community, must be discharged safely upon the foreigner. Freud's theory is compelling in that it accounts for the inexplicable, irrational, spasms of violence, which have endlessly punctuated human history as well as the inverse relationship between external and internal acts of aggression. In times of war, suicide rates drop, as do, seemingly, homicide rates, falling into a general basin during the onset and aftermath of WWII. Nobel laureate Konrad Lorenz and leading behavioral pharmacologist Irwin Lucki, who identified a neurochemical basis for aggression, have more recently advocated fixed-drive aggression models such as Freud's. Other biologists have identified brain centers which when stimulated electrically produce aggressive behaviors. These theories have the virtue of accounting for how even the perpetrators of violence, like the soldiers of the Mai Lai Massacre, may be dumbstruck, unable to answer the simple question "why?" According to these influential theories, our natures must find ways to periodically release the constantly accumulating toxin of aggression and securing a plausible justification for violence is an optional afterthought.



These people were shot moments later at My Lai.

The ethnographic evidence, the experimental data of Latain-Rodin, Milgram and Zimbardo, as well as the theoretical structures of Freud, Lorenz and Lucki suggest compellingly that all groups quickly designate an outsider, withdraw ethical barriers to cruelty and allow the discharge of aggression upon this figure without accountability for the aggressor. What then of the SFAI community? If such group dynamics arise between two non-speaking strangers sitting in a receptionist's entryway, as the latain-Rodin experiment suggests, we can then assume they operate here in the well-defined, strongly interconnected grouping identified as the San Francisco Art Institute. If we were said to have a disguising mark what would it be? Here each member has one trait in common: we attend by choice the most liberal, tolerant art school in the most liberal, tolerant American city. The word liberal, though, considering the information discussed



above, contains the tension of two opposed concepts: first, to be tolerant of others and, second, to be a member of a group which like all groups seems destined to generate it own scapegoats.

Katie Davis' artwork was torn from the wall where she obtained permission to hang it. It was then left, crushed, in a barrel of refuse without as much as the simple courtesy of a note of explanation. Larry Thomas, the President of "the most liberal art school in America," destroyed a student's artwork and did not feel compelled to offer so much as an indication that he had done so. He did not destroy the painting which hung in the courtyard for a long period of time which depicted a young woman whose face is being disrespectfully being ejaculated upon by several engorged penises, but he destroyed Katie's work. He withdrew from Katie Davis the guarantee given to all SFAI students and explicitly stated in our handbook to protect art that may be seen as "offensive or confrontational." He withdrew from Katie Davis the guarantee of free speech provided for the first Amendment of the US constitution which is the property of every human being within US borders. Because of something in the nature of her work, she has become, at least in Thomas' mind someone for whom normal rules of decency no longer apply. She exists where Thomas' conception of human dignity ends and where he feels aggression may be safely discharged without accountability. It is unlikely that this idea, that he had the right to do this, is entirely isolated within Larry Thomas' mind. It is improbable that someone who has survived politically as long as Thomas would totally eccentrically decide to do something as extreme as destroying a students artwork. It is impossible that someone who rose all the way to President does not know how to calculate public opinion. What is likely is that Larry Thomas acted in the accurate belief that the group in which he finds himself, the group which includes the SFAI Student Body and Faculty, will not come to Davis' aid. Perhaps Larry Thomas' actions say something, then, about us, who we defend and who we do not. Every group thinks they are the good guys. No one thinks *they* are a bigot, but clearly it is a widespread condition. There seems to be a blind spot in our self-image, a defect in the evenness of our tolerance, something that allows our representative to single out Katie Davis and do to her what none of us would like done to us, perhaps, something to do with the perpetual, sheepishly-intoned question: *"is she black*?"

Totem, Taboo & the Word "Nigger"

Katie Davis' work employed a variation of the word "nigger" and it was immediately destroyed. This of course is not an isolated occurrence. It demands no elaborate demonstration to confirm what we already know: if you speak this word at work you will be fired; say it as politician, even accidentally, and your career will be in tatters. Further, if you use the word "niggardly" you will also be fired, as was David Howard in Washington DC, though "niggardly" bears no lexical or etymological relation to the word "nigger," but merely rhythms with it partially. Even at a place of higher learning, adults are forced to refer to the word "nigger" as the "n-word," the way one refers to "naughty" words in the company of children. In a college class devoted taboo words, Ken Hardy, asked his students to suggest some taboo words. They discussed the historical evolution and cultural function of the word "bitch" and then the word "faggot" and on down the list of taboo words until a student suggested the word "nigger." Hardy repeated it and was fired. You can say insulting words for women and gay people but not the word "nigger." 40 years ago no one tried to ban the works of racially sympathetic Mark Twain for using the word "nigger." 40 years ago no instructor was raked over coals for reading aloud from Geoffrey Chaucer, the 13th century poet who employed the "n-ardly" word, as it is now sometimes called. In fact, it is quite remarkable that the taboo surrounding this word should emerge now after 150

What has occurred in the last 40 years that can account for the remarkable emotional charge this term has accumulated? The most obvious characteristic of this period is a loss of faith in the traditional symbols of American society. From the highpoint of national self-confidence in 1950's postwar America, our symbols have been shocked repeatedly. The Vietnam War, the Nixon Scandal, the feminist criticism of patriarchal Christianity, the continued scientific debunking of Christian myths, the humiliating fall of our religious leaders, Protestant scandals such as those surrounding Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Baker, and Catholic scandals such as the revelation of widespread child molestation by catholic clergymen – these events have made Christianity problematic for some. This is particularly true on our urban campuses, where beginning in the era of the Vietnam Protests, disillusionment with mainstream Christianity has left its symbols largely discredited.

Leading French cultural theorist, Julia Kristeva, evokes this weakening of faith in our traditional structures by stating that many of our actions now take root where there are "neither ideals nor ideology, where there is no longer family, church or political groups." What then does she feel fills the hollow center? From abroad, particularly from Europe, America is often seen as a country of simplistic, harsh moral propaganda. This is true of the religious settlers who founded this country; it is true of the rhetoric generated during the Cold War and it is true today. Part of the way we now organize our mental lives is around the worldview of political correctness. The foundations of this thought were laid at just the time when the Vietnam Protests rocked our campuses. French theorists, like Julia Kristeva, provided the intellectual infrastructure for the PC movement, but she describes the assimilation of French theory into American academic culture as an unwelcome distortion of French ideas: "many of our American colleagues have taken what we proposed and simplified it, caricatured it and made it politically correct. I can no longer recognize myself." French theory, according to Kristeva, was originally intended to support a radical plurality of opinion. She feels that it has instead been refashioned into a policy of constrictive, politically correct orthodoxy which, instead of supporting dissenting voices, silences them. It has become so oppressive as to be in her words "totalitarian." She asserts that the real cultural drama unfolding today is between those who wish to fill the hollow center with the coercive PC dogma and those who will not submit to group pressures to normalize human thought. "What is important is to not to affirm the power and identity of groups but to increase the freedom of individuals," she insists. "To assume a group identity is a dead end. And if some people have interpreted French thinking to mean they should they are dead wrong." What is crucial, and what is being lost, she feels, is the ability of individuals, like Katie Davis to retain a dissenting voice against the force of institutionalized political correctness. One can see a concrete example of the discomfort Kristeva expresses exemplified in the actions of an art school president who feels perfectly justified in destroying art rather than letting it express an opinion he feels is politically incorrect.

Julia Kristeva says work of Critical Theory founders Derrida, Foucault and herself misapplied by American academics in order to fill void left by loss of church.

Attempting to assess the meaning of one's own culture's symbols is like attempting to map the contours of a lake while floating in it. It helps to move back and, if possible, to get an aerial perspective. When missionaries and explorers first arrived in Australia, they could not understand why the natives would invest such intense emotion, both awe and dread, in their religious symbols which were to Western eyes were just meaningless pieces of wood or

overlooked something though. If they had stood back they would have realized that they too invested these same emotions in their bibles and flags and that to the people they discredited these bibles and flags were also meaningless strips of wood and plant material.

Pioneering sociologist Emil Durkheim stood back. He felt that there must be some reason that such different cultures invested their primary symbols with the same intense emotions. Durkheim found that the reason for this was that such symbols fulfill universal human needs. Friends, family and a shared cultural system are the ingredients necessary for a human community. Without these things an individual will feel vulnerable, rootless and isolated. They will have the painful awareness that nothing of them will be left when they die. Unlike other animals, a human being born entirely without community will die. With group inclusion, the short-lived, vulnerable individual participates in something older, more powerful and more lasting than itself. Among the aboriginal Australians these group benefits were given representation in the symbol of the totem. The totem was the Great Ancestor, the personification of the group's history -- it was the all powerful God, symbol of the groups communal might – and it was the place of the afterlife, a promise that the individual would live on in the group's historical memory. Durkheim found that all peoples create symbols like the totem, symbols that signify the powerful and eternal aspects of the group with which the short-lived, vulnerable individual attempts identify. Among religious peoples, this is a God, among secular peoples, another symbol, like the hammer and sickle, but with the same sorts identification occurring. Among the nature-immersed Australian clans it was a plant or animal species. Among the humanist ancient Greeks, human gods personified power and community. For the French of the 18th Century Terror, the Revolution was the dominant symbol of communal power. In each case, this symbol is surrounded by the most powerful societal taboos. Australian clansmen punish those who broke the taboo on harming the totem with the greatest severity. Spit on a bikers colors, deface a gangs tags, or burn the American flag and you will likewise suffer retaliation from those whose power is represented by these symbols. Such reactions are reflexive to those within the group but often seem extreme or irrational to those outside.

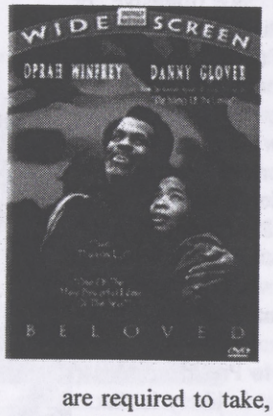
It is from this perspective that we can begin to make sense of our society's emotional investment in the word "nigger." The reason behind our extreme sensitivity to the "n-word" is not what we claim. It is not to serve the interests of the oppressed. If this were the case, the words "bitch" and "faggot" would have similarly fierce taboos surrounding them, but they do not. To take one example, gay men are subjected to extremely harsh, often murderous, repression in our society. School-age gay males have elevated suicide rates, largely because of being taunted with terms such as "faggot." But "faggot" is "OK."

Though it has not been thoroughly demonstrated, the data described thus far fits a schema like that proposed by Durkheim. Christianity was made untenable for some. French theory came in its place. As Julia Kristeva suggests, political correctness has, in the absence of our previous communal symbols, become the basis of our shared ideology, an easily comprehensible structure in which it all makes sense. Within our new social landscape the word "nigger" has a central place. The strength and irrationality of the taboo around this symbol, as well as its functioning centrally in well-defined social habitat, suggest that the power of the word "nigger" comes not from the forces of oppression but from the forces of identification. We will see how what is symbolized by this most tabooed of words has became our totem

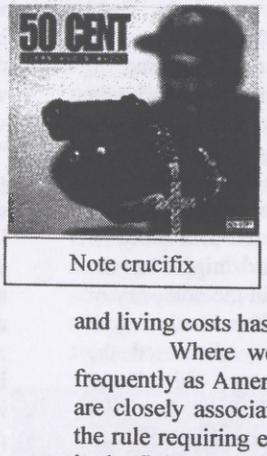
Opposite Poles: Extreme Compassion and a Desire to See Death

In order for primary symbols to function their nature must be misrecognized. If the symbol is seen for what it is, the symbol fails and the society, as it was, unravels. We can see this in the the authorities religious and secular, were able to protect these symbols from serious investigation they remained powerful but when, beginning with the popular unrest surrounding the Vietnam War, our symbols became subject to intense scrutiny, the emblems of our nationhood, The Cross and The Whitehouse, once invested with religious and semi-religious awe, began to lose their luster and subsequently segments of our society have reorganized themselves around freshly conceived tokens of group inclusion.

What are these tokens in the segments of society for which the cross has become just an obsolete anthropological curiosity? What forces of misrecognition are operative in these new symbols? Who are the authorities that protect them from scrutiny? It is probably fair to say most SFAI students do not consider themselves to be Christians but do regard themselves as liberal, racially tolerant people. In our classes we are required to study African Americans as noble people who have been made to suffer unfairly. This is the topic of for example of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs, which was quite recently required reading. We are also required to read Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* where we will discuss Barthes' most prominent example of a black man pictured in uniform. This is submitted as evidence that the corrupt French establishment wished to cover up oppression in the French colonial holdings, which surely they did. Last year's course of "Methodologies of Modernism A," which all graduating seniors are required to take, offered Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, (also a Hollywood movie starring Oprah) as required reading. It focuses on the suffering and degradation of American slavery and its aftermath. Beyond this, we are required to take a "Global Elective" to expunge any residual Eurocentrism that may have snuck by. One English class, though the instructor's name escapes me, centered entirely upon slavery. Judging from our curriculum, the institutionalized creed of our community seems to be closely tied to our being racially sympathetic non-discriminatory people. Our identification as such can begin to seem somewhat compulsive when, for example, we read even on SFAI's IRS 990 tax forms that the entire SFAI mission statement is "to provide full time education in the fine arts on a nondiscriminatory basis."



Yet for a school that is so intent on being nondiscriminatory, SFAI somehow got to be overwhelming white. SFAI falls not only very far beneath the racial diversity of our city but, in regard to black populace, falls far below our country as a whole which is 12.7% Black. At SFAI out of 466 undergraduates we have, at last count, 8 blacks; that is, our black populace is a mere 1.72%. No matter what we say, some form of segregation has taken place. At first thought, we might think this is based entirely on the relative economic weakness of black Americans, but nearby Stanford, a private school with similar tuition and living costs has 9.63% black population.



Note crucifix

Where we do come into contact with black people very frequently as Americans is in popular entertainment and there blacks are closely associated with violence and death. A good example of the rule requiring every highly successfully black entertainer, at least in the field of music to be associated violence and death can be found in the career of current favorite, Rapper 50 Cent. 50's lyrical choices and album title, "Get Rich or Die Trying," his CD graphic which is a target riddled with bullet holes, his music which uses gunshots as percussion, his lengthy rap sheet, his recent stabbing and 9 bullet wounds, all make clear that 50 Cent is symbolically and literally linked with brutal, bloody mayhem and death. Prison, run ins with the

common denominators found in the lives of most of our most popular black musical entertainers –Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, Snoop Dog, Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, DMX, and so on. In our fantasies, artists such as 50 Cent are the exclusive products of tough black neighborhoods, but in reality they are products of another sort. 50 was named best-selling artist, best-selling pop male artist, best-selling R&B artist and best-selling new artist at the 2003 World Music Awards. If Black violence is on the top of the charts then most of America is buying and most of America is not black, but white. Because of our economic and numerical superiority as well as our tastes, white people, like SFAI students, are paying impoverished blacks to produce images of degrading, guttural, misogynist, self-destructive behavior and nothing less than the real thing will do. We demand authentic street credibility affirmed by real-life risk taking in which many are injured or killed. Go to a 7-11 in a white suburb look at the magazine rack and you will notice that, by far, most music magazines are devoted to Black artists like 50 Cent with some, such as RIDES "THE ILLEST CAR MAGAZINE EVER," devoted to the cars black artists like 50 Cent drive and tips on topics such as automotive bulletproofing. Willingness to shell out cold hard cash is a far more honest index of what we truly want to see than are our pious, politically correct words. Though we don't like to admit it what we are really willing to lay down money for is pornography and murderous, degrading images of black Americans, occasionally together. We don't want to see blacks getting PhD's or being intellectual giants like Russell Crow in "A Beautiful mind." But when its blood-covered life in the gutter, we stand up and clap. In our SFAI classes we see white people busily consuming images of black suffering; so it is in our white neighborhoods where such images are also big business. It doesn't seem to matter that there are no actual black people around and maybe it's even better that way. This was the point of Spike Lee's recent movie "Bamboozled" which makes the statement that black entertainment is not an internal expression of black culture but a degrading, violent, distortion of black culture white dollars pay to create. As Lee states, "minstrel shows are still with us today. It's just that there's no blackface. But they might as well put blackface on it. . . say 'Look I got a house, I got a car, you know. I gotta make my way in this career. That's all I'm... these are all the roles I'm getting.'"

What does this say about the misrecognition involved in our primary symbols and who it is that guards these symbols. Once again it is symbols of black suffering and degradation, like the word "nigger," which seem to be primary. And again it seems that there is something odd about our orientation toward these symbols. First, we thought that the taboo against the word "nigger" was based on concern for the oppressed but that turned out not to be exactly right. Los Angeles officials recently ruled it improper for manufacturers to refer to the secondary hard drive of a computer as a "slave drive." Even on our SFAI tax forms our mission statement places "nondiscriminatory" right up there with "fine art." It does seem rather unusual that, on the one hand, we are terrified of anything that *might* hurt a black persons feelings yet, on the other, we are willing to shell out cold hard cash to see images of blacks endangered, suffering, degraded and dead -- in our most popular music, in convenience store magazines, in movies, on infotainment news programs and on TV reality shows where "blacks in handcuffs" and "black man under a bloody sheet" are always big crowd pleasers and always on heavy rotation – this is the image we pay for. In white suburbs there seems to be an overwhelming appetite for violent, guttural, death-related images of black Americans, though such neighborhoods are also well known for protecting their property values by keeping blacks out. In our classes we pay large sums to consume images of black degradation but when we consider the arcane terminology of Critical Theory used to analyze these images, how can we really believe that such theory is for anything but internal use by the highly-educated white PhD's who create it and the members of the white leisured classes who consume it and have the time to partially decode it. Like priests retaining power by keeping the masses illiterate, the function of such writing is not, as is claimed, to help underprivileged minorities, who cannot read it, but to "empower" the white PhD's who produce it. Our posture toward black Americans seems quite odd indeed combining the following messages: "We love you." "We will eradicate anything that makes you feel even slightly uncomfortable." "I'd pay money to see you die" and "White Only."

Spike Lee's Character Tommy Hilnigger satirizing the commercialization of degrading images of blacks

James Frazer's sacrificial King: Honored then Killed

He defleshed Himself, face first. As blood-slathered straps of his skin, fat and muscle, slid from His body, a marker was placed where the meat fell. His head, He rested on the pristine thighs of an undespoiled virgin girl and there He was starved to death. He was strung to living birds and flown over seaside cliffs. Sometimes eaten, sometimes burned, always, the ceremony was intricate and observed with intense scrutiny. These images along with the name James Frazer flickered through the consciousness of imperial Britain at the height of her colonial expansion. These images forced the British to reconsider themselves as well as the peoples they ruled. These images will also allow us reconsider the odd fetishism in which we have fixed the American black. We will see that the odd may be closer and more familiar than the ordinary.

James Frazer's was an anthropologist whose fame rests upon his analysis of the Ritual murder of the Divine King, a rite observed in many far-flung societies. He filled 12 volumes with studies of its manifestations in Africa, Asia and, most shockingly to his readers, in Europe. The basic template is this: a people set a man up as their king and divinity and at a set ritual interval or for example at the first signs of failing health, he is killed by the same people who made him their sovereign and their god

Usually the king was slain in person but the real king was also, at times, spared by the murder of an imposter, a proxy. For example, at the Babylonian festival of the Sacaea, "a mock king was dressed in the royal robes, allowed to enjoy the real king's concubines, and after reigning for five days was stripped, scourged, and put to death." This variation is found in Western variants such as the Greek *Pharmakos* who "for a whole year he was maintained at the public expense, being fed on choice and pure food. At the expiry of the year he was dressed in sacred garments, decked with holy branches, and led through the whole city, while prayers were uttered that all the evils of the people might fall on his head. He was then cast out of the city or stoned to death by the people outside of the walls." A similar formation is observed in the character of the, *Saturnalicius princeps*, the mock king of the Roman Saturnalia, a festival during which "the distinction between the free and the servile classes was temporarily abolished. The slave might rail at his master and intoxicate himself like his betters." In the further career of this mock king, the original nature of his sacrifice can be ascertained. "We have seen that in Italy, Spain, and France, that is, in the

countries where the influence of Rome has been deepest and most lasting, a conspicuous feature of the Carnival is a burlesque figure personifying the festive season, which after a short career of glory and dissipation is publicly shot, burnt, or otherwise destroyed, to the feigned grief or genuine delight of the populace. If the view here suggested of the Carnival is correct, this grotesque personage is no other than a direct successor of the old King of the Saturnalia, the master of the revels, the real man who personated Saturn and, when the revels were over, suffered a real death in his assumed character. The King of the Bean on Twelfth Night and the mediaeval Bishop of Fools, Abbot of Unreason, or Lord of Misrule are figures of the same." Here we should note that the mock king and the consumed image of the American black center around the same terms: cared for, honored, prisoner, slave, suffering, degradation, death.

We must also note that these same terms have been transmitted to the figure of Christ once so prominent in our society. Christ in Frazer's analysis becomes merely one of many divine kings given legendary birth at the winter solstice, as the forces of light overcome the forces of darkness. The Messiah comes with a long lineage of prototype deities such as blood-drenched Mithras and Dionysus who share in his virgin parentage, divine rebirth and blood symbolism. He performs the function of all divine Kings as described by Frazer: He is the "King of Kings," whose true composition is only resolved in the mystery of his sacrificial death. He is the ritual scapegoat, like the *Pharmakos,* dying for our trespasses, for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" Hebrews 9:22. He is the conjurer of nature resurrected on the vernal equinox, now celebrated as Easter which takes its name, function and celebration date from the festival of *Eostre*, the Anglo Saxon goddess of fertility. Christ is also the mock king given short reign just before execution. "And they clothe him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail King of the Jews! And they smote him about the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him… and led him out to crucify him."

The British were scandalized by the demonstration that primal ritual could be seen bleeding through their refined deity. Their refined customs were a way that they justified colonization. Frazer felt his society's anger. It hurt them to see their special possession just one rather late manifestation of ancient primordial currents, currents on which they floated right along side those they wished to consider beneath them. These symbols existed many thousands of years before Christ, traveled two thousand years within him and just stopped? Have we stilled the oceanic force of history simply by having read Foucault? Or are we, like the British, people who prefer not to feel the water between our toes?

Atonement: From Mock King to Christ to the Degraded African American

We can here begin to appreciate the words of Kara Walker, an artist like Spike Lee and Katie Davis who employs "offensive" racial imagery to disrupt conventional thought. Walker states that "I always felt that it's really a love affair that we've got going in this country, a love affair with the idea of race issues, with the notion of major conflict that needs to be overcome and maybe a fear of what happens when that thing is overcome." What kind of love affair is it? We have seen it containing these terms: exaggerated compassion, criminal, slave, suffering, degradation and death and seen further that these terms were transmitted from the divine sacrificial king to Christianity. The last term in this series is atonement: it is a central purpose of the Christian Mysteries and their predecessors, like the Greek *Pharmakos*. This being so, it should also appear in the function of the consumed image of the black American which appears to be heir to the ritual significance of these earlier forms.

Camptown Ladies, detail.
Kara Walker, 1998.
Cut paper and adhesive on wall.
Overall size 9 x 67 feet.
Courtesy Brent Sikkema, NYC.

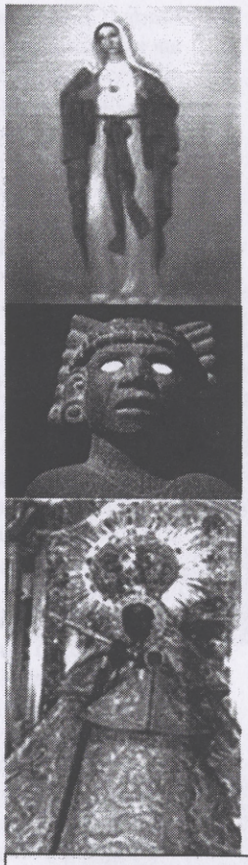
Middle Easterners, one of the fastest growing populations in our country are connected with serious social concerns such as terrorism, and retaliatory attacks for terrorism, in which innocent individuals are killed. The fear of the Middle Eastern terrorist has engendered "the war on terrorism" which, through the Patriot Act, has allowed for "American citizens suspected of terrorism to be held indefinitely in military custody without being charged and without access to lawyers" and made it possible for the FBI "to conduct secret searches and gives them wide powers of phone and Internet surveillance, and access to highly personal medical, financial, mental health, and student records with minimal judicial oversight," as described here by the ACLU. Another issue concerning this group is the importation of problematic customs such as female genital mutilation, against which laws have recently been enacted in several Western countries. For the second time in recent memory America is at war with a Middle Eastern country and, if that war should escalate, many more people like the students of this school will be sent to fight and to die. Issues such as these are of immediate and long-term concern for those who wish to understand the forces currently shaping our world. If you discuss these issues in a large group there will be differences of opinion, emotion and debate. Now ask yourself this: what do you know about the background to these issues? Give yourself a thumbnail sketch of US-Middle East relations say over the last century, not the exact dates just the most major players, simply a basic "who did what to whom" . . . take a minute to think about it. . . . Name one major event happening say between 1900 and 1940. . . . If you are like most SFAI students you have received little or no information on a subject which will affect your life and could conceivably take it. Now, ask yourself the same question but this time in regard to the American slave trade, just the major players who did what to whom. It's pretty easy, isn't it? Europeans and Americans took black people from Africa to America and other European colonies to labor as slaves. This lasted until the US Civil War between the slave holding South and the North who won the war, after which slavery was abolished. It is also well known that from this time forward blacks have faced a variety challenges to their effort in attain economic and social parity with whites. Almost every human being raised in the US is aware of this information.

Middle Eastern vs. Slavery: if it's really "full-time education on a non-discriminatory basis," why is it that some relevant groups get no class time?

The goal of education, in the most pressing sense, is to provide the student with new knowledge enabling them to more effectively navigate their world. As mentioned earlier, texts about slavery are frequently required in SFAI classes. When we take one of these classes, we already know the general facts about slavery. There will not be meaningful discussion about whether or not slavery is good or bad. In fact every forward-looking person knew that it was bad over 138 years ago when it was abolished by the 13th Amendment. This is not really cutting edge thought for an "avant-garde" art school. It's not even education. Education would be something like this: learning

that the victors of WWI colonized the non-Western territories of the defeated parties thereby attaining control over most Arab lands which were divided into "mandated territories" thus shaping or creating modern states such as Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt. "Britain granted Iraq independence in 1932 but retained a military power base in the new kingdom. Both the world strategic balance and the British petroleum industry ruled out any possibility of a real British withdrawal," in the words of a common encyclopedia. The extraction of resources and the bloody wars of independence have created resentment against Western powers in these states and the division of these lands often without regard to the ethnic realities of their inhabitants has made this a politically unstable region. These realities have contributed to war, terrorism and emigration which in a number of ways will likely affect the reader's life and could possibly end it. Learning such things would constitute education, but instead we get the same old drone about slavery. Why?

If it's not education what is it? What happens in such classes? We go there with a very simple dogma we all know beforehand; we consume images of the suffering and degradation of blacks, like those from this line in the recently-required novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, "because slave life had busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue, she had nothing left." Compare with litanies of physical abuse found in the bible, here from the Book of Mathew: "Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands." As in the Christian Mysteries, Morrison's characters will touch the things of the spirit as a result of their sufferings. In *Beloved* and the Bible, a figure involved in a violent bloody sacrifice is thereby made to manifest a supernatural force. In both books, the spirit brings destruction and knowledge. In both books, we locate ourselves in long-term historical narratives containing a simple moral division between good and evil, centuries-old oppression involving slavery and the generation of a special figure who through suffering crystallizes a spiritual force. Substitute American blacks for Ancient Hebrews and the stories coincide to a remarkable degree. Both stories involve their audience in a pseudo-historical narrative, the culmination of which never comes. Early Christians thought that the Final judgment would be in their lifetimes. Later, it was the year 1000, then the year 2000; now it is floating somewhere perpetually ahead of us. Likewise, slavery never really ends, never reaches a culmination despite its being abolished 138 years ago. Kara Walker spoke of our love affair "with the notion of major conflict that needs to be overcome and maybe a fear of what happens when that thing is overcome." We once organized our lives around an event that never comes because the concept of a final judgment functions in a ritual narrative by which we construct ideals of good and evil, create



Forced change results in blended forms.

Above, the Virgin Mary blended with Aztéc Goddess Tenontzin to form the "Virgin of Guadalupe." Below, Santeria's "Our Lady of Regla" formed from the Yoruba Goddess Yamaya.

Syncretism uses the next nearest symbol.
Regla is holding the baby Jesus who in Santeria symbolizes Orungan, Yamaya's son who raped and impregnated her with the first man

community, assure ourselves we are the good guys, cleanse our selves, and atone for sin. When white people went to church and studied the slavery of the Hebrews, they weren't trying to learn new information about slavery and really they didn't care about the Hebrews. Likewise we don't care about slavery or black people. If we did we would discuss the chattel slavery of Sudan where blacks are auctioned on the block like animals -- today. But we don't want to hear about that. Instead, we are much more interested in our own ritual drama about four hundred years of oppression. We are interested in telling ourselves we are the good guys, creating a sense of community among "liberal" white people. We cleanse ourselves with images of bloody degradation and suffering. We show compassion and repent and leave feeling ourselves to be good members of the PC, multicultural elect having atoned for the pollution that contaminates our past, even though blacks are decidedly not present in person. This type of atonement for one class of people by the suffering of another has a long history, inherited from the ubiquitous ancient rite of the divine king, through the mock kings of Europe, through the King of Kings, Jesus Christ, and into our classrooms today. Since this seems vital to our investigation, let's be exact about what history we have inherited.

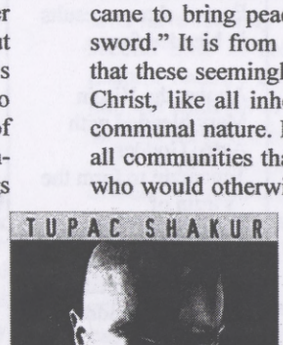
"Gleefully Trashy"
The mock king of the Saturnalia?

To summarize Frazer, 1) The sacrifice of the divine king functions first as a meditation on how the divine can be reflected in the imperfect and the human. 2) The murder of the divine King exports the death impulse and other social pollutions. This is given graphic illustration in the innumerable rites in which a sacred figure like the *Pharmakos* is charged with the forces of death and is then killed just outside the village boundary. 3) This function is often conflated with a sacrifice to ensure the fecundity of nature as in the Bohemia ritual in which a figure is led by children to village boundary and burnt as the children sing: "Now carry we Death out of the village, The new Summer into the village, Welcome, dear Summer, Welcome, Green little corn." 4) This rite is a meditation on class with one class conflated with another by the creation of a temporary mock king who is then in a rite of inversion given a temporary and ostentatious "reign" in which he mistreats his superiors and shortly thereafter is put to death. For the inversion ritual to be as stark as possible the mock king is generally created from the ranks of criminal or slave, precisely the two classes from which we now, almost exclusively, consume our image of the Degraded African American.

Here is a detailed description of the *Pharmakos* by George Thompson author of *Aeschylus and Athens.* This ritual "corresponding to the carrying out of death, acquired fresh vitality as a ceremony of public atonement . . . a slave or criminal was escorted out of the city: After being given a meal of cheese, figs and barley bread, he was whipped on the genitals by branches taken from wild trees and burnt to death on a pile of timber taken from wild trees and his ashes spread to the winds." Notice the attention to detail, to each thing the criminal or slave ate, the type of branches, the specific region, corresponding to fertility, where the whipping was inflicted and so on. Notice also the similarities to the degradation-atonement ritual of a Christian making the stations of the cross, meditating on each suffering, on each time Christ fell, how he bore the cross, how the nails were inserted, how he reacted when given the gall to drink, how the thorns cut his flesh, how the whip lashes fell, how he too

was whipped by reeds and so on. One version of the "Stations of the Cross" includes the prayer "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed."

We once declared our love for Christ and let no one blaspheme his name and yet were never truly happy until we saw him suffering, bleeding and dying again, and again and again, in the bible, in sermons, in paintings and in participatory rituals such as the "Stations of the Cross." Today we declare our compassion for the Degraded African American and let no one dare say the word "nigger" and yet we are never truly satisfied until we see him suffering, bleeding and dying, again and again and again, in movies, in music, on TV reality shows where he is led away in cuffs, on TV news broadcasts and cop shows where bloody stigmata stick to white shrouds over supine black carcasses. And in our classes where the details of Black degradation and suffering are mulled over in delicious, compulsive detail, a rosary of broken lives by which to cleanse the pollutions of our pasts. "Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed." We demand a string of ritual images by which we, like a Christian making the stations, identify ourselves with the sacrificial figure who is then identified further with death before being sent beyond our borders, like the *Pharmakos* to die for our sins. Identification needs detail– gold teeth, bandannas, signet rings, gats, glocks, Tec 9's, Uzi's, all special postures that 13 year old white boys ape in suburban bathroom mirrors; all of the special ritual terminology, like white kids calling each other "nigga." We are him, but he dies. We once had whips, spears, crowns and crosses. We now have guns, gold, and electric chairs, flawed affluence then death. So that "that *through death* he might destroy him that had the power of death." There was an inversion of class in the rite of the mock king - slave ruled master and wore exaggerated royal baubles signifying mock affluence but tinged also with humiliation, a brief reign -- then execution. Is this not the image of the "pimpin" black man that our society will pay to see—a "hoe" slapping tyrant, draped in exaggerated symbols of affluence tinged with humiliation and death–necklaces become inch-thick nooses of gold, oversized golden saucers for medallions, rings become fist-spanning gold ingots, expensive tennis shoes for which it is not unheard of for the occupant to be killed-- a recent image of 50 Cent features him holding stacks of bills like Tupac Shakur once did, before he was shot. These are not signs of black people gaining control of the capitalist system in a meaningful fashion but are instead emblems of the brief reign of a drug dealer before he is cut down. Could this be any other than the mock king of the saturnalia, "a burlesque figure personifying the festive season, which after a short career of glory and dissipation is publicly shot, burnt, or otherwise destroyed, to the feigned grief or genuine delight of the populace?"



In none of the cases mentioned does the ritual inversion of roles amount to an actual inversion of roles. On the contrary these rites signify the maintenance of existing power structures. A slave or criminal is sacrificed in the place of the real king, slaughtered beyond the walls, protecting those within, given a reign of a ridiculous nature as a "Lord of Misrule" so that after which the people happily return to the status quo. We don't really want to help the Degraded African American. The terminology of our texts tells us that they are for internal us by the leisured classes. Perhaps the reason that there are not more blacks in our SFAI classes is twofold. Their presence among us does not make sense. The ritual requires the consumption of a criminal or slave who is distinct from "us." And, secondly, perhaps blacks find the white liberals who care so much about them, who have a "love Affair" with their race issues – are just too creepy.

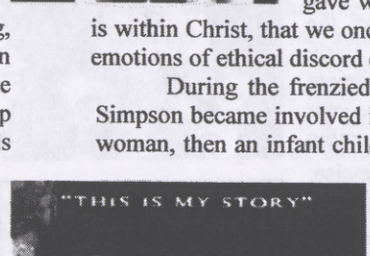
The origin of the syncretism of Santeria – of virgin saints mixed with fertility goddesses, is the result of the forced impact of Catholicism upon African religion. Unconcealed corruption forced us to relinquish our Christ *when we were not yet ready*. Christ now radiates within the usurping PC worldview. The ancient form inhabits next nearest element. Christ: the suffering, criminalized, sacrificial member of an enslaved racial underclass fell upon his iconographic double, the American black. That we should choose to consume just this, out of all of the images the world has to offer, at just this time -- black for Hebrew, the iconography is constant; we are the same.

The Destroyer & the Lamb: the Thug & the Angel

The image of the Degraded African American congeals around two contradictory poles. The first is that which we study in our classrooms: he through whom we expunge the sins of our past, the noble sufferer, forever downtrodden, he who elicits our sympathy and compassion. The second is the image consumed in entertainment, perhaps most fully exemplified in the medium of music. In this case, the Degraded African American is the seemingly diametrical opposite. In music he is reduced even further from a complete human being to the image of the "Gansta." Here, the fantasy is of a destroyer, the amoral feral beast, a cold-blooded unstoppable, sociopathic killer, "a nightmare walking, a psychopath talking, King of my jungle, just a gangster stalking," as Ice-T renders it in the song "Colors" from the film of the same name. In this figure we are transported, in fantasy, to the realm unbridled lawless power, where we identify with "a brother who will smother your mother" as one NWA song goes. How are we to make sense of this duality in our desired image of the African American?

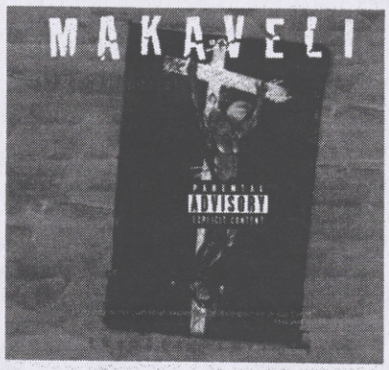
As it seems we have inherited the intellectual machinery by which we now process the image of American blacks from the Christian mythos, let's continue the comparison. Christ is "the Lamb," "the Prince of Peace," but he also warns, "do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword." It is from the vantage point of Durkheimian totemic theory that these seemingly opposed functions may be rendered intelligible. Christ, like all inheritors of totemic symbolism, is a symbol of our communal nature. He is a symbol of a community, a community like all communities that provides belonging and power to the individual who would otherwise suffer isolation and vulnerability. Christ is that which we must love; he is the symbol of the ethnocentric in-group towards which only *Eros,* the constructive life impulse, may be directed. But, as a symbol of one community, Christ must also be the symbol by which the unrestrained amoral force of *Thanatos,* the death impulse, may be discharged upon the foreign. Christ is the symbol of dreadful incomprehensible power, in whom we identify in fantasy with the godlike vengeance of the communal body roused to violence, He "who will gather all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." When fantasy gave way to the discharge of actual violence, it is within Christ, that we once perpetrated the brutality of war without emotions of ethical discord or accountability.

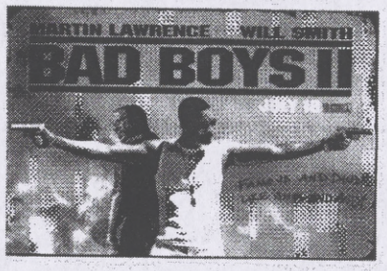
During the frenzied pack violence at My Lai, Pfc. Varnado Simpson became involved in the action first by shooting an unarmed woman, then an infant child. He next describes being overcome in a type of delirium in which both the humanity of victim and the perpetrator are submerged in trancelike identification with orgiastic pack violence. "The baby's face was half gone, my mind just went…and I just started killing. Old men, women, children, water buffaloes, everything…I just killed." Here ordinary day-to-day morality does not apply, outside of responsibility, and without law, his mind narrowed to a single point, the serviceman, states "I just



killed." It is just this identification with amoral, merciless pack violence that we consume in the symbol of Gangster Rapper, a being narrowed to single violent point as exemplified in the chanted chorus of the 50 Cent song "Blood Hound." "I love to pump crack, love to stay strapped/Love to squeeze gats but you don't hear me though/I love to hit the block, I love my two Glocks/Love to bust shots but you don't hear me though."

And indeed it is through music that the average American comes closest to experiencing the full euphoric identification with the group, when at a stadium concert we all chant in union with the stage performer, feeling the oceanic power of the crowd, touching the dissolution of self in an organism of thundering magnitude. That American "outlaw music" like Heavy Metal and Rap is blasted in tanks and helicopters as their occupants commit My Lai style atrocities in Iraq today, should not really surprise us. Outsiders, underdogs and outlaws have always been our heroes. Christ for example is all three as is Clint Eastwood. 50 Cent is but one more variation of the eternal American hero, the roguish man who stands tall with a gun and, as always, in our consciousnesses we quickly skate over the slippery spot where we forget the contradiction: that the outlaw-rebel-outsider is actually a mass market consumable whose mannerisms are aped by every kid on the block, that he is really the radical insider and none other than a projection of ourselves, our fantasies of power and domination, of the community writ large, of the ultimate amorality at the heart of power. In order to locate the true outsider, we must look for foreigner upon whom this power is inflicted. A recent documentary on the music of the current US military action states that American "outlaw" music was that which marines carried closest to their hearts, its aggressive lyrics "being memorized by every soldier and forever linked to the violent events they accompanied." The most disturbing aspect of George Gittoes' footage is the repeated admissions by marines that, within the sounds of Rap and Death metal, they "shot anything that moved," admissions that are eerily echoed in the foreign press where one reads openly of "massacres."





CRANACH 1536

It is here that the concessions made to the forces of ethnocentrism are redeemed. Moral self-direction and autonomy once abandoned yield returns in terms of unbridled, unprincipled force, finding its most euphoric pitch in warfare, the most direct harmonization of the individual within the organism of raw communal power. It is through the relinquishment of moral accountability and exercise of personal self-control that one moves from the social contract exercised within the ethnocentric in-group toward the intoxicating loss of self, becoming a cell in the super organism of dreadful power, in the delirium of force exercised on the inhuman outsider, into a piece of "that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing;" it is here that the individual can experience most directly the power of a god if as according to Durkheim, it is through such symbols, being more powerful, more ancient and more immortal than the individual, that we derive the concept of gods and the divine and that this identification comes closest to its source when the communal body is aroused to collective violence; like Christ with a flick of a finger sending all evildoers to the furnace, like the soldier who sprayed a truck of Iraqi non-combatants killing 14 family members, like the fantasy of a gangster who holds death and life in his hand, the secret inner mystery we skip over is that the most divine reaches power are the most depraved, most purely amoral, the most fully inhuman.

We have seen how the aggression of the group is discharged on the enemy without but not the enemy within, the heretic, the mishandler of the totem. It was certainly in the name of the Degraded African American that Larry Thomas destroyed the work of Katie Davis. If political correctness is the new church then it has become again filled with scoundrels, just like the old one: Reverend Al Sharpton who incited crowds in New York's black neighborhoods, resulting in the arson attack of a Jewish-owned store, killing eight, and the stabbing death of an orthodox Jewish man; Clarence Thomas who had the nerve to call the testimony of Anita Hill "a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks" even as he opposes affirmative action -- these men are the televangelists of today, moral opportunists wrapping themselves in the legacy of true martyrs such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X while cynically using the terms of civil rights for their own purposes. Larry Thomas was second in command during a period in which the recent WASC accreditation reports states that: "from all accounts, the nature of university governance was very top down . . . This created a high level of distrust and a basic violation of basic shared governance behaviors" (20). As Academic Dean, it was Thomas' job to protect the role of the faculty in school governance; Thomas cut the faculty out. "At SFAI, the appearance of faculty governance is provided by the existence of the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Union. However, in practice, faculty are not functioning in ways that suggest that they are responsible for the curriculum and it appears they are not always involved in key decision making about new programs. The Curriculum Committees are not Faculty Senate Committees and are, instead, committees of faculty appointed by administration. A parallel situation is also found in faculty review" (28). Thomas concentrated this power in his own hands and used his control of the review process to get rid of his opposition. Are we now to believe that this man is such a passionate "hero of equality," so consumed with the need to protect the downtrodden that he cannot control himself? The destruction of Davis' artwork is, in my opinion, the cynical, diversionary grandstanding of a man who has everything to hide in regard to equality.

Katie Davis' work threatens everything that Larry Thomas stands for. That is, an art world smothered in mediocrity and convenience, steeped in corporate, PC, *Oprah* education, a gray politically correct playground in which truly challenging commentaries are not welcome, but where the hand of corruption is safe when wrapped in a hippy glove. Larry destroyed Katie's work because she threatens to destroy his world. Like seeing the real wizard of Oz behind the curtain, Katie Davis work tears away the veil, lays bare the cogs and pulleys by which the worldview of political correctness is erected and within which Larry is cozy. Katie Davis puts a razor to the aged, mundane, cataracts that obscure our sight, peeling our globes so that they again produce raw vision, so that our world can appear again as what it is: glittering, painful, filthy, confusing, contradictory, hate-filled, immaculate, strange... Katie's work asks the important questions: are we so different from those we disparage? Do we have an unseen continuity with those we oppose? Are we really the good guys? Is the world as simple as we think? Are we too comfortable with mediocrity? How can we now move forward? Those questions are the San Francisco Art Institute if they can no longer be asked here, SFAI must be somewhere else.

UNDERGROUND
Comic Page
SAMMY STUDENT LEARNS A VERY IMPORTANT LESSON
SAMMY STUDENT LAMENTS:
AKK! I'M HAVIN' A ARTISTIC CRISIS!
I WANT TO DRAW COMICS - BUT COMICS AREN'T ART!
SHADOW OF DESPONDENCY
WHO SAID THAT?
YES THEY ARE!
I DID!!
COMIC BOARD!
SFCB
YUP - COMICS ARE ART!!! JUST ASK CHRIS WARE, A CARTOONIST INCLUDED IN THE 2002 WHITNEY BIENNIAL!! SO... DRAW COMICS! AND ONCE YOU'VE DONE THAT, I HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE FOR YOU TO SHOW THEM...
?
ON ME!!!
SFCB
YOU SEE, I LIVE ON THE WALL IN THE CENTRAL STAIRWELL AT SFAI, SO WHEN YOUR COMICS ARE PASTED UP ON ME - LOTS OF PEOPLE WILL SEE!
PASTE
THERE ARE THREE SIMPLE WAYS TO GET YOUR WORK ON ME!
1. DROP WORK INTO THE BOX IN THE PRINTMAKING LOFT, UNDER THE FLATFILE
2. DROP WORK INTO THE BOX MOUNTED BELOW THE COMIC BOARD
THERES ALWAYS A SPACE ON THE COMIC BOARD OPEN FOR YOU, SAMMY!
SHUCKS!
3. APPROACH SOMEONE YOU SEE CONTRIBUTING TO THE BOARD, SUCH AS JEFF WALKER

*GRAB SUBMISSION FORMS FROM BRIAN YARNELL'S MAILBOX FOR FULL DETAILS.